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CONTROL: Cuba II; and now. (See Sagan on C-II).

NUMBERS OF WEAPONS: not proportional to deterrence, safety (neither lower nor higher is necessarily better (nor is size of warhead) (vs. size and number of battalions: the Pope) (AJW (How much is enough: wrong question. Never asked: how many is too much?) (But for first strike: or credibility of FS: can't have too many). (Today, yesterday: news on GZ report, calling for dismantling MM III).

Sagan notes that both hawks and doves agree that the risk of war erupting from Cuba II was very small, almost negligible, but for different reasons: the hawks, because Khrushchev was sure to back down ; the doves, because JFK would never attack. (Who does he cite for the latter?)

The former was my own view, Harry Rowen's, Dillon, LeMay. (LeMay wanted to attack anyway, on Oct. 28; but he thought that wouldn't lead to war, either: no K response in Berlin or Turkey: i.e., we couldn't "provoke" K into attacking no matter what we did. Probably right! But not certainly! (he didn't foresee annihilating 42,000 Soviet troops with nuclear weapons after we had lost 100,000 troops to Soviet tac nuc weapons. (Were SS-6s made ready for firing, ever: fueled? Probably not. Do we know? Or their bombers moved to advanced bases? Weapons facing Europe put on alert?)

It was surely true that JFK didn't want to attack, either the SU or (given the likelihood of general war) Cuba. (Would he have been as reluctant to attack Cuba if there were no Soviet connection? He didn't act that way, privately. Was he totally bluffing, with respect to the Chiefs, with the exercises and plans?) (Just as he was determined not to send combat troops to Vietnam. Disturbing thought. But he did **not**, despite pressure, send troops to Cuba I, knock down the Berlin Wall, send troops to Laos, or troops to Vietnam in 1961. Nixon would have done all of those; and probably (not surely) Ike; probably Johnson.

Thus, the conclusion is doubly affirmed: **neither** leader was willing to go to war, either conventional or nuclear (though JFK did take an act of war: the blockade.¹

¹ The argument over legality never addresses the overriding question: Would JFK have been "legally justified" in going to war, altogether, either against Cuba or the Soviet Union? If so (dodging the constitutional question of his failure to consult with Congress: he could say this was like a "sudden attack," although it wasn't; it was "sudden preparation for possible later sudden attack," which—it's true—could be militarily prevented only by very quick response. (A fait accompli, rather than an ultimatum? The latter was considered. It was rejected on grounds (?) that it would be too likely to evoke counter-ultimatums, against Berlin or Turkey (note logic of each!) and arguments about legality and illegality worldwide, both deterring our

It's true that neither wanted war. But each wanted to **threaten** war, even possible nuclear war. Some of those threats were bluffs, some probably not. And to make their threats credible, each took great efforts, involving vast and widespread military activities and many thousands of men, to ready their forces for carrying out the threats.

Both of them made special efforts to assure control of their own forces. If each of them had achieved total, reliable control, it does seem plausible that the risk of war would have been very low, if not zero. But that was very far from the case. Actions which they had not ordered and would not have permitted if they had been aware of them and could have prevented them, actions that could have seeded violence and escalation were not merely possible, they actually occurred, on both sides. Neither was aware how true that was for the other's forces, or for their own: both were prone to see all opposing actions, mistakenly, as the result of deliberate decision by the other leader. (The role of Castro was totally discounted by the Americans, for a generation after the crisis. Khrushchev's awareness and fear that he did not reliably control Cuban actions—which he did not disclose to JFK-- was a major factor in his own sudden backdown.)

carrying out the ultimatum. Acheson argued that legality was irrelevant, when the security of the nation was at stake. It was actually hard to argue that this was the case, in Cuba II, though the administration implied that it was. But the administration could probably have convinced both the Congress and public that war was justified. In those circumstances—when peacetime rules don't apply—it would seem to follow that an act of war, the blockade (or even an attack)—in effect, a limited war—was justified, legally. Khrushchev, calling it piracy, was in effect asking, "Are we at war? We will be if you're not bluffing: if you stop our ships; at war in the Caribbean and—as I choose—elsewhere (Berlin, Turkey...). But **he was bluffing**: he didn't test the blockade with a military ship, and turned some back.

It does seem that in these circumstances—when war was seen as legally justified, with no time for Congress to decide—a limited act of war (not immediately violent) could be legally justified. (Actually, there was plenty of time to involve Congress, given how much time the Exec took! No one really addresses why—or even, the fact that—no one in Congress took part! Presumably that was because JFK expected that both Repubs and even Dems to come down on the JCS side, in favor of immediate attack. (As it turned out, anyway: did he expect this? He was angered by it; no one addresses his motivations for not doing this earlier. Did no one suggest this?!)

Amazing situation, considering there was **no** precedent for such an attack. "Pearl Harbor" came to RFK's mind; not really apt (for a limited attack: well, not entirely wrong, either; the Japanese attack did not desire full-scale hostilities with the US, just to remove a possible preemptive/deterrent force)—though that was in context of a broad, aggressive campaign in Asia.

These included:

--SAC U-2 off-course over Pole and over SU (acting during crisis without knowledge of ExComm); a SAC provocation? They wonder (No; but Power not unhappy); (McN panicked; also Hilsman?)

--Migs scramble; NORAD air defense fighters scramble, armed with nuclear warheads (unknown to ExComm); K complains later. (JFK: some SOB.)

--Vandenberg launch (not known by ExComm?)

--DEFCON 2, in clear (known but not ordered; picked up by SU, as intended by Power)

--US subs forcing SU subs to surface, with small depth charges (How much and when did ExComm know? Why did they permit? What was Navy rationale? (humiliation? Since subs submerged again, and were lost.) ExComm did not know subs had nuclear torpedoes; could use without Moscow orders (though not supposed to). One on verge of firing.

--Message explaining US Navy procedures for signaling to SU subs did not make it to subs.

--First MM squadron is made operational, but rules for "two-capsule control" are physically bypassed, to make this possible.

--False alarms during crisis.

--SAM commander fires against orders requiring directive from Pliyev.

--Cuban AA fires against wishes of K: out of K's control, but he doesn't reveal this to JFK.

--Castro's urging of preemptive strike in case of invasion frightens K, presumably at thought that Castro might be able to control the tac nucs and even MRBMs in event of invasion (like SAM, which K believes Castro ordered) and would fire them. (The dangers of basing these weapons so far from SU and so near to Castro comes home to K, after SAM and AA).

--A B-52 had been off course, heading to SU, a while earlier.

--de Soto patrol (Oxford) offshore—ordered to stand off further (by JFK?)

--Mongoose operators ashore in Cuba, out of communication (?) (Stepped up by RFK on Oct. 16; not known to all ExComm)

Note: Other important elements in the situation, in opposition to the leaders, **did** want war, at least against Cuba and (LeMay) some against SU. There was unprecedented momentum toward this before the crisis—thus, unprecedented readiness for it, and hopes and expectations of JCS-- and JFK had encouraged this (starting right after Cuba I, picking up in November 1961 and March 1962, culminating on Oct. 1 looking toward Oct. 20). Large parts of Congress did want war with Cuba (August-October). (See Time Magazine!) . War with Cuba (without Sovs) was pressed by Repubs and would have been advantageous for JFK (again, had not the Sovs been involved, and tac nucs!) **just before the election** (so much so that some Repubs—Cotton—were predicting this “October surprise.”)

JFK's challenge was to **pull back from this**, after having set it up, just at the moment when it seemed most justified, most excusable (because it had suddenly become too dangerous: as K had hoped and planned: though he didn't seem to have expected the attack before the election, after all! If he had, he would have had to be ready to announce operational status well before the election: including shutdown of U-2 by operational SAM.

The most dangerous weapons were those hardest to control: Castro's (AA); tac nucs; submarines. (covert operators in Cuba?)